



Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council

www.highlands.state.nj.us

100 North Road
Chester, New Jersey 07930

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contact: Patty Sly (908) 879-6737 ext 104

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Highlands Council to Hold Second Work Session

Topics Highlight Breadth, Depth of Plan

Chester, NJ- The New Jersey Highlands Council will hold its 2nd six-hour work session today to discuss key policy decisions needed in the development of the Regional Master Plan. Today's topics are historic and cultural resources, scenic resources, significant natural resources, waste water treatment infrastructure and baseline economic indicators.

"The range of topics reflects the breadth and depth of issues the Council is addressing in preparing the plan. We are working very hard to consider not only the watershed environment *and* its communities, but also the protection of land owner equity and the financial realities of infrastructure demands and economic development," said Council Chairman John Weingart.

Wastewater treatment infrastructure is included in the plan to ensure that potential growth areas are matched to existing or readily expandable treatment capacity. This minimizes the need for new and expensive infrastructure that would be a financial burden on the municipalities and taxpayers.

"Use of baseline economic indicators reflects the long term view being taken by the Council. We will measure far more than water quality and quantity. It is in our collective best interest to monitor the plan's impact in a comprehensive way," said executive director, Dante Di Pirro. Indicators may include such measures as housing units, property taxes, property values, and the number of land sales.

A significant natural area includes unique or exceptional examples of natural communities or geological formations supportive of significant biodiversity. An example of one such area in the Highlands is a mountain lake containing a

concentration of state-endangered and other rare aquatic plant species, including the only known occurrence of one plant species.

Historic, cultural and scenic areas will be included in the Regional Master Plan to afford protection to these valued resources and to maintain the essential character of the Highlands region.

Discussion of each topic will drive the development of the Regional Master Plan. The work sessions are open to the public. The 4:00 p.m. start time was chosen to afford interested parties with daytime work schedules the opportunity to attend. The meeting agenda and all five policy proposal papers are available on the web site at www.highlands.state.nj.us.

In August 2004, the New Jersey Legislature enacted the Highland Water Protection and Planning Act in order to protect over 850,000 acres which supply drinking water for more than sixty-five percent of New Jersey's residents. The Highlands Act created the Highlands Council as a regional planning entity charged with protecting the water resources and natural beauty of the New Jersey Highlands while allowing for planned, sustainable development and redevelopment of the region. The fifteen Council members include a broad and representative range of elected officials from Highlands municipalities and counties, as well as individuals with diverse backgrounds and area perspectives.

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